
Department of Veterans Affairs



One-VA Enterprise Architecture Communications Plan Version 1.0

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Enterprise Architecture

Communication Plan

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Situation:

The mission of the One-VA Enterprise Architecture (EA) is to develop and implement an evolutionary, high-performance, One-VA information technology architecture, aligned with our program and business goals that enable enterprise-wide function, process and data integration. The 1996 Clinger-Cohen Act, Federal agency mandates CIOs with developing, maintaining and facilitating the implementation of an integrated Enterprise Architecture across their Departments.

On Wednesday, April 4, 2001, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight and promised to reform the current out-of-date information technology architecture in use at Veterans Affairs (VA). He pledged to identify a new Enterprise Architecture (EA) that will end the current practice of maintaining "stovepipe" systems designs that use incompatible systems development, and he pledged to end the collection of data that does not yield useful information.

The competition facing the VA EA is the philosophy of "business as usual" and "that's not the way we do things." Moreover, budgets and plans are program and project-based, providing little incentive for managers to consider actions that do not payoff within the context of their immediate scope, despite the potential for benefits accruing to our stakeholders and other VA offices. This Communication Plan will overcome the inertia and parochial interests of business and IT management and staff, transforming their attitudes and behavior toward a

corporate model of integrated customer service. The Plan will do this by presenting a coherent, convincing, and compelling message to multiple levels of the Department using a variety of media.

Objectives:

“The One-VA EA is the primary authoritative resource within the Department of Veterans Affairs for enterprise IT throughout the entire life cycle of planning, programming, budgeting, development, integration, test/certification, deployment and in service support”. [VA EA Chapter 1]

The primary purpose of the VA EA is to inform, guide and manage the decisions of the enterprise, especially as they pertain to information technology (IT) investments. The goal of this Communications Plan is to promulgate the content of the EA via “active communication” across the Department. The messages and media described below provide a coherent, convincing, and compelling message for following the guidance and direction contained in the VA EA.

OCA will employ “active communication” to anticipate the needs and the questions of target audiences at three levels to:

1. Management
2. Peers
3. Staff

Balancing the communications effort is essential. If information flows are all in one direction, vital findings may not get to decision makers in a timely manner. Conversely, uninformed or uninvolved project managers may become embarrassed or frustrated and dismiss the EA. To ensure robust information flows, we will employ two simultaneous communications models, the management model and the marketing model.

The management communications model [Figure 1] will be easy to implement, as it is quite familiar to the three target audiences. OCA will report the status of EA and our progress in implementing this plan. In turn, senior management will give direction based on the reports and the revealed needs of owners and external stakeholders. OCA will coordinate activities with the Administrations and Staff offices and receive feedback. OCA will supervise and measure the performance of staff. Most of the mechanisms of this model are already in place; they simply need to be tapped by OCA for the purposes of this Plan.

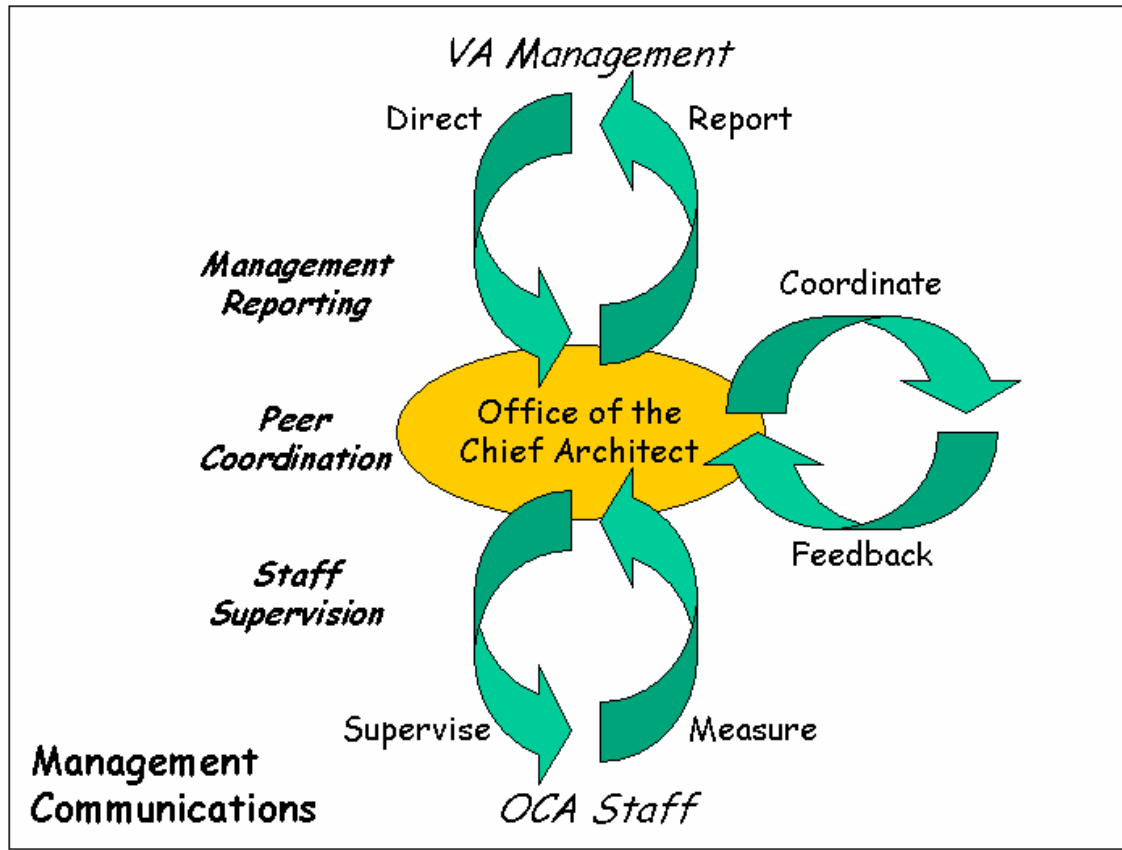


Figure 1: The Management Communications Model

The EA is not a “business as usual” solution, and its success might be hindered by sole reliance on the traditional command and control model. The management communications model is not sufficient for a heterogeneous, diverse, and decentralized organization like VA. A less hierarchical approach of persuasion and encouragement is a necessary enhancement. Managers and staff must feel empowered to pursue the EA vision, as senior management cannot anticipate the myriad opportunities to support – or frustrate – the goals of the Enterprise Architecture. Therefore, we recommend the simultaneous use of a marketing communications model. OCA will propose to senior management and receive approval. OCA will promote the EA and solicit feedback. Finally, OCA will train and evaluate staff. This “softer” approach encourages contributions and cooperation, with attitudes of ownership and second-effort at all three levels.

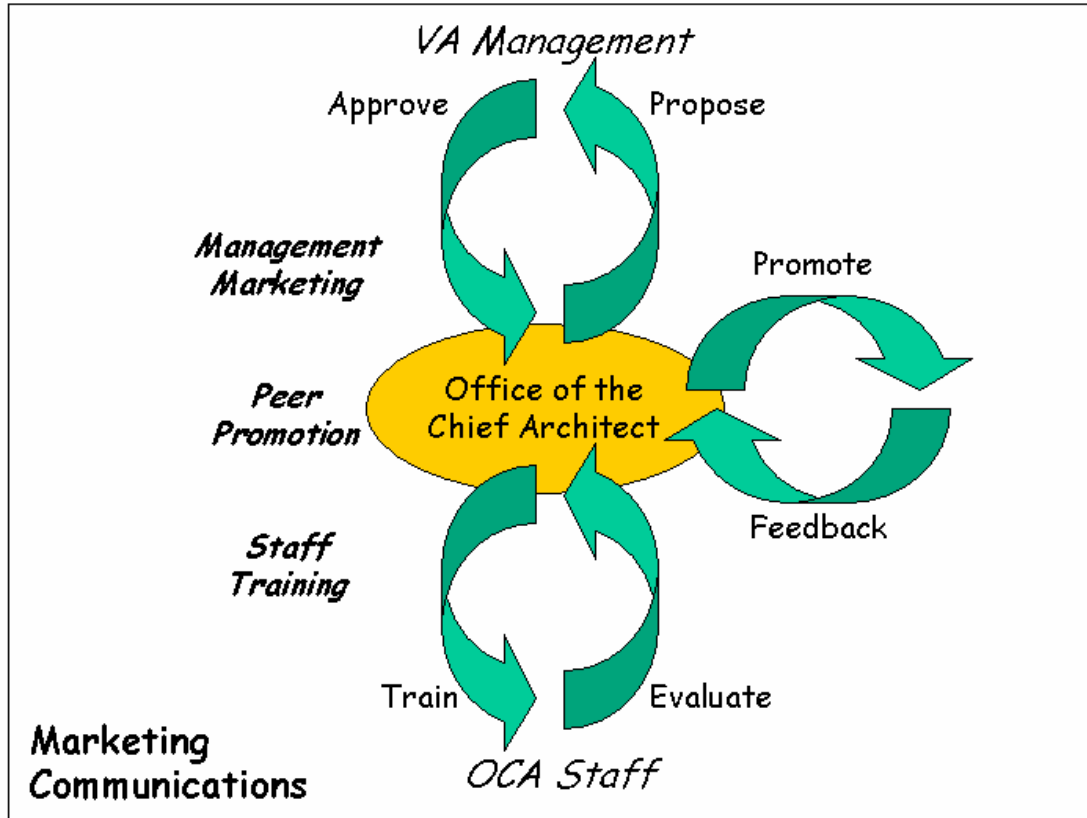


Figure 2: The Marketing Communications Model

Methods:

VA managers and staff are bombarded daily with messages from superiors, subordinates, customers, and suppliers. Unless we take particular care to present a coherent, convincing, and compelling message, the EA may disappear into the noise of routine data. Therefore, busy business and IT managers must see the that understanding the One-VA EA as critical to their participation in key Departmental processes:

- Project Management Oversight
- Capital Planning
- Budgeting
- Project Execution
- Acquisitions
- Post implementation reviews

Furthermore, we will use a wide variety of media and methods.

- Speeches
- Briefings
- Reports

- Email exchanges
- Web sites

The content of these coherent, convincing, and compelling messages shall address:

- Success stories from other Agency and private sector organizations as well as the experience and knowledge of EA experts [PG 3.1.1]
- Examples to demonstrate how an EA can provide a blueprint and roadmap for desired changes or improvements in mission performance and accountability [PG 3.1.1]
- Legislative and executive requirements for developing, maintaining, and implementing an EA within the Federal sector [PG 3.1.1]
- Status of the VA-wide rollout.
- The role of the EA in service improvements to veterans, decreasing costs, etc.
- Benefits to target audiences to get buy in; how does EA solve their problems.

We appreciate that our audiences are normal human beings who respond more readily to their individual concerns than to the larger, more abstract, needs of the Department. Therefore, a coherent, convincing, and compelling message must address the manager's and employee's need to:

- Solve a problem;
- Save time;
- Make or save money;
- Improve lifestyle, status;
- Feel good about themselves.

We can make our messages compelling by appealing to these motivations. If we ignore these motivations, we reduce the efficacy of the Plan.

Roles and responsibilities:

We need agreement on who are the key participants in the communications plan and what their roles and responsibilities are. A clear understanding of who does what will prevent wasteful debate - or worse - hesitation and inaction.

Chief Information Officer (CIO) – “It is the CIO's role to interpret the Agency Head's vision and to recognize innovative ideas (e.g., the creation of a digital government) that can become key drivers within the EA strategy and plan.” [PG 3.3.1] “The CIO should initiate a marketing program to emphasize the value of the architecture and the Agency Head's support and commitment.” [PG 3.1.3]

Chief Architect (OCA) – “The CIO's staff, in cooperation with the Chief Architect and support staff, defines a marketing and communications plan consisting of (a)

constituencies, (b) level of detail, (c) means of communication, (d) participant feedback, (e) schedule for marketing efforts, and (f) method of evaluating progress and buy-in.” [PG 3.3.1] All tasks in the attached table are assigned to OCA.

Major Stakeholders - The message must consider the interests of the major stakeholders

- **Owners** approve and fund enterprise business functions (EBF) and key enabling functions (KEF) and KEF and supporting IT projects. Line of Business leadership and Administration and Major Staff Office leadership design and implement programs that “enable enterprise-wide function, process and data integration.” Owners control processes to achieve their goals.
- **Competitors** want maximum control and value. If VA does not perform its mission effectively, other organizations may be given some of our responsibilities and resources. Our principal competitors are state veterans agencies and other Federal agencies.
- **Customers** want maximum value. Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) seek maximum value from VA for their members.
- **The public** wants maximum value and autonomy. The public has given VA the mandate – in Lincoln’s words – “to care for him who has borne the battle and his widow and orphan.” The public expects veterans and their families to be cared for with minimum disruption to their daily lives.
- **The work force** seeks higher wages, improved working conditions and better benefits.
- **Markets** determine the conditions for real estate, office space, office equipment and supplies, medical equipment and supplies, computer hardware and software.
- **Suppliers** want maximum profits with advantageous terms.
- **Regulators** want maximum control and minimum costs. OMB, Congressional committees, and GAO seek efficient and effective use of resources.

Information Technology Board (ITB) – As the formal body representing the interests of the owners, the ITB direct the activities of the EAC.

Enterprise Architecture Council (EAC) – Comprised of a mix of VA management, employees, and contractors; the EAC provides a common venue for the coordination of several stakeholder groups. The EAC updates the EA and approves EAWG recommendations.

Enterprise Architecture Working Group (EAWG) – As the participant closest to the work force, the EAWG evaluate standards and technology and recommend to the EAC any revisions to TRM and SP.

VA IT Project Managers – design and implement projects that “enable enterprise-wide function, process and data integration.” In the vocabulary of the Zachman Framework, the project managers are the designers and builders; they are a vital peer audience for the OCA.

Like members of a sports team, each of these participants has roles and responsibilities for leadership and "followership" in the Plan. If a participant does not have a significant role and responsibility, then that participant's involvement should be re-evaluated. We do not want to waste people's time with make-work assignments. The more visible participants may – from time to time – enjoy the spotlight, but it is the team that wins or loses.

Tests for Success:

Performance measures will be developed to determine the degree to which the VA EA stakeholders are aware of the EA, its benefits to VA, the value it adds in their service to the veteran, and how to use the EA to help them achieve the Secretary's "one-VA" objectives. Initially, stakeholders will be surveyed periodically until more direct methods are discovered from lessons learned through the surveys.

Performance measures are essential to the effectiveness of this communications plan. Measures will be drawn from the objectives of this plan and will allow us to focus and refine our efforts. Performance measures are assigned to each media and message; the communication plan will be revised based on the outcomes of these measures.

We will conduct a series of surveys of VA employees and managers to determine their awareness and support for the EA. We will also test for the efficacy of the tasks described in this plan.

Schedule:

A logical sequence of actions will enable a coherent message while incorporating the feedback the communication plan is intended to generate. This Gantt chart conveys the approximate sequence of events over the coming year. Some tasks are small and recurring over the next 12 months. Others are major that will be decomposed into subtasks later. Nevertheless, we sequence the major efforts to facilitate the incorporation of lessons learned and improvements in content. We will continuously evaluate and improve the recurring tasks, with the possibility of discovering new and more effective tasks.

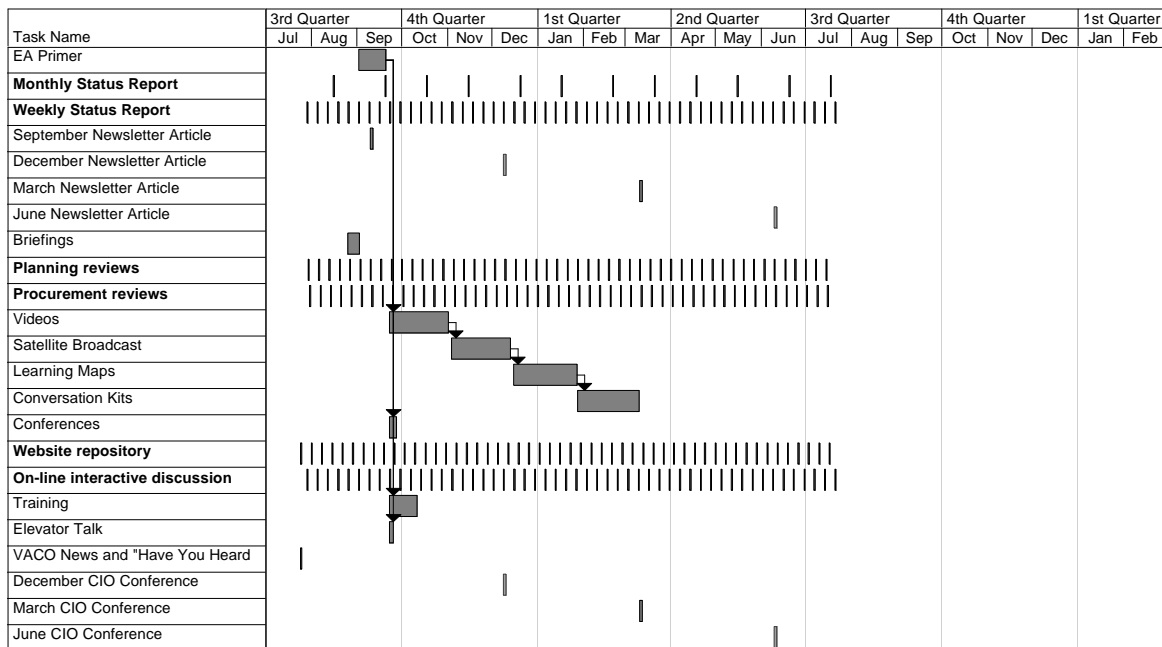


Figure 3: Gantt chart of Communication Tasks with Estimated Beginning and Ending Dates.

Tasks:

EA Primer – (This may already exist in some form as the output of the Secretary's conference last year. We need to check this.) According to Federal CIO Council's Practical Guide, the EA Primer is an essential early step. The objective of the EA primer is to inform Agency business executives and stakeholders of the EA strategy and plan. The primer includes Secretary's vision for the enterprise and the role of EA in accomplishing that vision. The primer describes the tenets and benefits as an agent of change in achieving organizational goals (e.g., integrating business services and initiatives) and as a critical resource to evaluate options for change as business and technology needs evolve. The primer also describes the roles and responsibilities of the senior executives and their organizational units in developing, implementing, and maintaining the EA. The primer includes customized sections that relate directly to specific business line audiences. The primer lists the benefits of the EA to VA's stakeholders who can offer their skilled resources, support, and time to implementing the EA. The primer is widely distributed throughout the Agency and on the Agency's web site. It should be briefed to all personnel impacted by the introduction of the EA. Introductory materials in the primer are the basis for into local and Agency-wide communication and training programs. [See PG Section 3.3.1] Oversight agencies will expect to see this primer and evaluate it carefully as they review the Communication plan and VA's effectiveness in implementing EA.

Status Reports – Periodic reports are a classic means of communicating in an organization. Management expects reports on a weekly and monthly basis, as well as ad hoc reports in response to events and external requests. The Department has a number of reporting mechanisms already in place; will be tapped by OCA for the purposes of this Plan. The report content can be reused for other tasks like newsletters, web sites, and online email discussions. Each report should stand on its own, just in case those who are not familiar with EA read it out of context. Reports should include references for follow-up by readers who become interested as a result of reading the report. Reports are an inexpensive means of communicating to those who have an interest in EA. They are less effective in reaching those who are not highly motivated by the topic.

Newsletter – The Office of the CIO produces a newsletter that can be used to keep IT employees informed on progress of Enterprise Architecture initiative and other IT initiatives. Newsletters reach a broader, less technical, and less informed audience than reports. Therefore, the writing style should be less technical and more informal than would be used in a status report. However, the impact of these articles can be significant in shaping the opinions of the Department's management and staff toward EA.

Briefings – A common set of briefing materials is an invaluable resource for delivering coherent, convincing, and compelling messages. On-line briefing slides will be available for quick downloading, on-line viewing, with a presentation voice-over for face-to-face briefings. OCA will develop and maintain materials for senior managers to give face-to-face briefings for key audiences.

Project and planning reviews - An attentive audience is half the communication challenge. In VA, nothing gets the attention of managers and staff faster than a requirement for getting spending authorization. We will get attention if the EA is required reading for the approval of projects and the expenditure of funds. OMB has made this point clear by including EA questions in the A-11 Exhibit 300 form. Likewise, we should tailor our acquisition review questions to reflect the specific mandates and recommendations of VA's EA. The battle against "stove-pipe systems" and "business as usual" begins with effective planning and project management.

Procurement reviews – A successful communications program will also explain the consequences of failing to participate. We will encourage VA project managers to take the EA seriously. Therefore, only "trained" staff should be able to answer the EA questions when submitting acquisitions and CIP plans. We cannot ask all the germane EA questions in a single project review process. So those responding need to understand and address the broader issues implied by a handful of questions. The risk is that requestors will quickly discern what the school solutions are and fail to engage the EA in its robust complexity. Unless we levy a cost on gaming the review process, even well trained staff will take shortcuts. Abuse of the process must be corrected.

Videos – We live in an age of dynamic and visual media. Professionally produced videos can explain the essence of Enterprise Architecture for different audiences in a way that reports and newsletters cannot. Videos can be used independently or in combination with conferences, satellite broadcasts, or other methods. Videos would focus on the benefits, values, and relationships inherent in the EA environment, not the technology. Seeing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs say he wants VA to adhere to the Enterprise Architecture is worth a stack of memos and directives.

Satellite Broadcast – If the video is a compelling media, the satellite broadcast is even more so. VA has an excellent broadcast ability to generate real time delivery of urgent messages. VA employees across the Department can see the Secretary and his senior managers discuss the merits of EA and ask employees to participate. A call-in question and answer session will permit direct interaction with these managers. During a broadcast, senior management can personally persuade staff and line managers to do their part for EA.

Learning Maps - Visual illustrations are a powerful tool to engage people in change. The creation of large colorful map(s) can be a focal point for meaningful employee dialogue about the changes introduced by the EA. These maps will provide an ongoing anchor to show current focus, predict next challenges and reference progress. The maps will show the overall direction the organization, how the implementation of enterprise architecture is progressing and where current efforts are focused. Although learning maps are valuable for reaching the rank and file VA employee, the process is labor intensive and not well suited to the technical aspect of the EA. As the primary focus of our communications efforts will be on managers, more sophisticated methods are preferred.

Conversation Kits - These kits are produced to augment the learning maps. EAC members and OCA staff would conduct meetings with small groups of employees using these kits. The kits include key messages to communicate, brief exercises to engage employees in dialogue, and suggestions for conducting these meetings. These conversations would focus on the benefits, values, and relationships inherent in the EA environment, not the technology. Although conversation kits are good at reaching the rank and file VA employee, the process is labor intensive and not well suited to the technical aspect of the EA. As the primary focus of our communications efforts will be on managers, more sophisticated methods are preferred.

Conferences – No electronic media can replace the personal presence of well-informed and articulate speaker. Face to face gatherings allow two-way communication about the IT initiatives, to explore issues and develop alternatives. VA employees can watch senior managers present the merits of EA and solicit employee participation. Question and answer sessions permit direct employee

interaction with these managers. Between sessions, EA evangelists can personally persuade staff and line managers to do their part for EA.

Website repository – A website and document repository are an inexpensive and effective means of collecting and archiving EA materials. All the EA documents and Communication Plan materials are (or can be) made available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

On-line interactive discussion - A lively discussion is a sign of a healthy initiative. OCA has created unmoderated email discussion lists where questions can be answered and archived so others can reference them. We have established a VA-only email discussion list with an Intranet-only archive. In addition, we support a public email discussion list with no archive. These lists have been created and are maintained with not direct costs and a modest amount of staff time for administration. Moderated lists or news groups would require more staff time; establishment of a news server would involve somewhat greater level of effort and would introduce a useful but unfamiliar Internet technology to the VA culture.

Training – Directives and reports are not effective if the intended audience does not understand them. Many of the management and technical concepts associated with EA are new and unfamiliar to VA employees and managers. OCA should develop specific training programs to educate key groups of people on new skills needed in the implementation of the enterprise architecture. Led by EA evangelists, training sessions can persuade, inform, and equip employees and managers to get involved with EA.

Elevator Talk – Chance encounters in the elevator, Metro, or on the street can be turned into marketing opportunities for the trained EA evangelist. OCA will prepare thirty- to sixty-second oral briefing outlines suitable for any VA audience, but primarily for managers and senior personnel. These conversations would focus on the benefits, values, and relationships inherent in the EA environment, not the technology.

VACO Daily News and "Hey VA!" – These broadcast announcements are the electronic counterpart to the elevator speech, only directed to all VA employees using VA email systems. OCA can write fifty to 100 word news briefs suitable for a general VA audience explaining the benefits of the EA and supporting initiatives. Similar messages can be prepared for the employees Earnings and Leave Statements. These are excellent media for short, non-technical informative and persuasive messages directed toward all VA employees.

One-VA Awards – Everyone likes to be appreciated for their efforts. We will acknowledge those VA managers and staff who have demonstrated the attitudes and behaviors that embody the EA. These awards – including a substantial monetary benefit - should be made at least annually before the largest available

audience of VA employees. The Secretary or the CIO should present the awards to the outstanding individuals and teams for implementation of the projects and principles of the VA Enterprise Architecture. We should give as many awards as there are deserving recipients and teams. Given the magnitude of the effort involved in implementing the EA, we should be unstinting in our recognition of those working to bring it fruition.

Benefits of this Plan:

The goal of this Communications Plan is to promulgate the content of the EA via "active communication" across the Department. The tasks, messages, and media described in the Plan are intended to provide a coherent, convincing, and compelling message to VA: Follow the guidance and direction contained in the VA EA. In the words of the Practical Guide, "Gaining executive commitment to any new initiative requires the development of a strong business case and a communications approach to effectively convey that business case." [PG, 3.1.1]

Only through careful planning and communication can the EA become an institution at VA. Only if we work in concert with common materials and methods will we convey a balanced and consistent message. The plan provides a coordinated use of diverse media (brochures, web site, presentations, and newsletters, etc.). Only if we use a wide variety of media and methods will we gain the branding or name recognition the EA requires.

The Plan will reinforce the lessons and decisions of the EA and influence project managers to use and follow the EA. By implementing this communications plan, the EA will be stronger and the Department will "end the current practice of maintaining 'stovepipe' systems designs that use incompatible systems development, and ... end the collection of data that does not yield useful information." The Plan's scope and completeness will promote the value-added by the EA and earn the support of both internal and external stakeholders for continued and expanded use of the EA.

Media	Message	Audience	Cost	Benefits	Recommendation	Priority	Frequency
Primer - inform Agency business executives and stakeholders of the EA strategy and plan	Reporting and Marketing	VA managers and employees	Staff time; Publication and printing costs	Awareness	Yes (PG section 3.3.1)	High	Annual
Status Reports	Reporting	Senior Management	Staff time only	Control	Yes	High	Monthly
On-line Newsletter	Promoting	IT Project Managers	Staff time only	Awareness	Yes	High	Quarterly in CIO Newsletter
Briefings: Develop materials to give face-to-face briefings for key audiences.	Reporting and Marketing	IT Project Managers	Staff time only	Awareness	Yes	High	As needed
Planning reviews	Monitoring	IT Project Managers	Staff time only	Awareness	Yes	High	Daily
Procurement reviews	Monitoring	IT Project Managers	Staff time only	Awareness	Yes	High	Daily

Videos: to explain EA for different audiences. Can be used independently or in combination with conferences, satellite broadcasts, or other methods	Marketing	VA employees	Professionally produced videos are expensive and time consuming to set up.	Suitable for background and high level information on EA, ZF, and other relatively stable topics.	Optional	Low	Once
Satellite Broadcast: Utilize broadcast ability to generate real time delivery of urgent messages.	Marketing	IT Project Managers	Professionally produced broadcasts are expensive (but less costly than videos) and time consuming to set up.	Suitable for medium level information on EA processes and governance,	Optional	Medium	Annual
Strategic Illustration Map or Root Learning Maps: The creation of large colorful map(s) serves as a unifying picture to pull together employees for meaningful dialogue about the changes introduced EA.	Marketing	VA employees	Previous effort for OneVA cost \$; ad staff time to lead sessions.	Educates broad spectrum of VA staff	No		

Learning Map Conversation Kits: These kits are produced to augment the strategic/learning maps. Managers conduct meetings with small groups of employees using the conversation stimulators.	Marketing	VA employees	Previous effort for OneVA cost \$; and staff time to lead sessions.	Educates broad spectrum of VA staff	No		
Conferences: F2F gatherings to allow two-way communication about the IT initiatives, to explore issues and develop alternatives.	Marketing	VA employees	Staff Time	Lateral communication for VA sponsored events. For non-VA events, potentially significant external communication and visibility for VA EA across govt.	Yes	Medium	Quarterly
Website repository: Create and maintain a web site and document archive.	Coordinating and Promoting	IT Project Managers	Staff time	Awareness	Yes	High	Daily

On-line interactive discussion: Create email discussion lists or moderated news groups where questions can be answered and archived so others can reference them.	Coordinating and Promoting	IT Project Managers; Any employee can enter the conversations and follow the threads to understand details	Staff time	Awareness; Continuous process improvement	Yes	High	Daily
Training: Develop specific training programs to educate key groups of people on new skills needed in the implementation of the enterprise architecture.	Directing and Training	IT Project Managers	Staff time	Awareness	Yes	High	Quarterly
Elevator Talk: Thirty- to sixty-second oral briefing suitable for any VA audience. Explaining the essence of the EA initiative.	Reporting and Marketing	VA Senior Management	Staff time	Awareness	Yes	High	Daily
VACO News and "Have You Heard: Fifty to 100 word news briefs suitable for a general VA audience explaining the benefits of the EA and supporting initiatives.	Coordinating and Promoting	VA employees	Staff time	Awareness	Yes	High	Quarterly
OneVA Awards	Promoting	VA employees	Staff time	Awareness	Yes	High	Quarterly